

Federal Highway Administration Midwestern Resource Center FY 2000 Business Plan

Introduction - The Operations of the Midwestern Resource Center

The Midwestern Resource Center (MRC) is one of four Resource Centers in the field organization of the FHWA. Resource Centers are designed to provide expert assistance, training, technology delivery and interagency coordination. The MRC is staffed with technical specialists in a wide variety of functional areas who provide primary service for the ten Division Offices and State DOT's located in the upper Midwest. MRC Specialists are agency resources and since the Resource Centers operate in a boundary-less mode, specialists can be called upon to provide service to customers anywhere in the United States.

The primary business functions of the MRC are as follows:

Expert Assistance

Providing technical and program assistance to the Division Offices and to State DOT's, their primary customers. This assistance can be provided for any or all of the following:

- In response to problems and issues identified by the Division Offices
- To achieve the objectives of the strategic and performance plans
- To leverage the "culture of better" (Divisions and State DOT's, MPO's etc. that are actively striving to "raise the bar" on performance. Any of the following themes - "Better tomorrow than we were today", "Making Roads Better", "continuous improvement forever").

Technology Delivery

Leveraging the power of innovation by expanding and accelerating the deployment of **new** ideas, approaches, and technologies designed to improve performance.

- **"New"** in the national context of delivering the results of R&D investments (knowing about and creating expectations for others about R&D products and their applicability to local situations)
- **"New"** also in the local context of continual delivery of better practices (on the way to best practices)

Training

Meeting customers needs for new knowledge through training by:

- Preparing and delivering "short courses" tailored to meet specific client needs
- Assisting in the development of new formal training courses (i.e NHI)

- Instructing NHI courses.

Interagency Coordination

Improving the efficiency of programs or initiatives through “ONE DOT” efforts or work with other federal, state, or local agencies.

Human Resources Development

Staffing the MRC is among the highest priorities for FY 2000. Recruiting and training the Specialists that will be serving the needs of the transportation community in the Midwest is an early target directly contributing to our eventual success. Continual investments into the enhancement and deepening of capabilities will also be an ongoing need. Technical specialists will be always be confronted with the need to balance self improvement and professional networking with the demands of service to our primary customers - **service must always come first.**

The Purpose of the MRC Business Plan

The MRC business plan provides for the conscious thinking and planning to seize and leverage future opportunity. It is based on the perceptions and experience of the MRC Specialists in knowing and understanding the needs of our primary client base in the Midwest. It comes from judgements based on conversations and observations at the state level. It respects the timing and political sensitivities between divisions and states. It blends national initiatives and servicing local needs. It recognizes that the collective MRC success is based on the total of many individual successes, all of which come through assisting others. The MRC cannot be successful unless others succeed in delivering transportation programs and services.

This plan is a prospective look at delivering on a set of expectations. Expectations formed first at the individual level and then validated through interactions with MRC Management. It forms the basis of our priorities through the year; it drives us toward better measuring our inputs, outputs and results; it communicates planned activities and achievements over the course of multiple FY's; and it forms the basis for allocating resources within the MRC. Underlying this plan is the plans of the 10 FHWA Division Offices in the Midwestern states.

Human Resources Targets and Metrics

The development of technical specialists with skill levels that are useful to our customer base, must, by necessity, bring capabilities and perspectives that will enhance existing levels of knowledge and understanding. Developing these deeper capabilities in each specialty area is a goal of all resource center managers. An environment that encourages the inquiring mind to reach out for other perspectives and experiences will assist in the development of broad levels of experience and know-how. This skill base in combination with a “service culture” will be the breeding grounds of successful

MRC specialists. There are several activities that have been integrated into the basic work plans for each specialist. These several activities form the building blocks of successful relationships, networking, capability enhancements and customer service.

Corporate Management Strategies (CMS)

The FHWA's Corporate Management Strategies (CMS) serve as a road map to help guide the Agency in achieving the strategic goals and objectives outlined in the 1998 FHWA Strategic Plan. The seven strategies are leadership, strategic planning, human resource development and management, customer and partner focus, information and analysis, process management, and business results (metrics). While many minor activities are ongoing on all seven strategies, the Midwestern Resource Center will complete major projects in three areas in FY2000; strategic planning, business results, and information and analysis. The information and analysis initiative is further outlined in the Infrastructure and Operations Team Section which immediately follows this section, while strategic planning and business results are outlined here.

The FHWA Corporate Management Strategies are based on the seven Quality Cornerstones. They are listed here with activities that the Midwestern Resource Center is taking in each area.

Leadership Cornerstone

Goal: Strengthen the FHWA MRC's leadership system.

MRC Initiatives

L-1 Deploy the 360E feedback technique to the MRC Leadership

Measure: 360E evaluations used by Director, Field Services, Resource Center Manager, and Team Leaders

L-2 Conduct an MRC Self-Assessment

Measure: Assessment completed. Action plan developed.

Strategic Planning Cornerstone

Goal: Define the MRC Strategic Planning process and systematically integrate strategies and initiatives into a unit plan (MRC Business Plan) and into individual action plans with appropriate milestones and measures.

MRC Initiatives

SP-1 Define and document a strategic planning process which assures alignment with national goals and objectives through service to MRC customers.

Measure: Process defined and documented

SP-2 Ensure that individual action plans are linked through customer service to the NSP and NPP with appropriate measures and milestones

Human Resource Development and Management Cornerstone

Goal: Increase the technical competence and effectiveness of MRC employees to meet Agency and customer needs

MRC Initiatives

HR-1 Develop and maintain IDP's for all employees of the MRC

Measure: Number and percentage of employees with IDP's

HR-2 Encourage and assist employees to attain elements of their IDP's

Measure: Number and percentage of employees completing elements of their IDP's

HR-3 Encourage and assist MRC specialists to advance under FHWA's TCT program

Measure: Number of specialists applying
Number of specialists promoted

HR-4 Support training of MRC specialists i.e.:

- Presentation Skills training
- Consultancy training

Measure: Number of courses presented

Customer and Partner Focus Cornerstone

Goal: Identify and serve MRC customer and partner needs and measure their level of satisfaction

MRC Initiatives

CP-1 Establish and continue the development of close professional relationships with Division Office and State counterparts

Measure: Face to face meetings and discussions held with each Division Office, State, etc.

CP-2 Identify and continue to expand a list of opportunities for providing assistance in each State

Measure: List developed and shared with Division Office specialists and management

CP-3 Continuously serve customer partners needs in a timely, value adding manner

Measure: Customer feedback results for each specialist

Information and Analysis Cornerstone

Goal: Improve MRC key business information systems and metrics

MRC Initiatives

I/A-1 Develop and implement an improved system of tracking RC measures of success

Measure: System improvements

I/A-2 Develop a real time linkage for MRC specialists to the automated feedback system

I/A-3 Attain a rate of feedback of 70% on service/assistance provided

Measure: Feedback rate

Process Management Cornerstone

Goal: Develop efforts to continually improve MRC processes to exceed the expectations of our customers and partners

PM-1 Create an MRC Strategic Planning Task Force to evaluate existing mechanisms for strategic planning and to make recommendations for process

improvements. This will be a cross-functional team of Resource Center and Division employees will be established to define a framework for the individual, and collective thinking and planning that goes into the business planning process.

Measure: Task Force in place. Recommendations made. Actions planned

PM-2 Promote and encourage area wide initiatives, i.e.:

- Develop a peer review process for ADA's
- Midwestern Information Technology Team

Measure: Initiatives in place

Business Results (Metrics) Cornerstone

Goal: Develop improved business metrics to measure the overall quality and improve the effectiveness of MRC services

MRC Initiatives

BR-1 Improve the effectiveness of the Resource Center:

- Measures:
- Quarterly reports shared
 - Second generation measures established for 2 key functions
 - Success stories shared
 - Portion of FHWA Annual Report submitted by MRC

Infrastructure and Operations Team Section

To help create the best transportation system in the world, FHWA employees need easy access to timely and accurate information. Access to good information improves the decision-making process, increases the rate at which innovations and technologies are transferred, and saves money by reducing unnecessary duplication of research and other efforts.

FHWA employees and customers in the Midwest have asked the Resource Center to create a mechanism through which they share information with each other in such areas as best practices, state-of-the-practice, training, implementation, and research trends. The Division staff view this as a tool for remaining informed on activities conducted by counterparts throughout the Midwest. Information on current and future research projects, especially pooled-fund projects, could also be tracked. An electronic newsletter focusing on technical content would be responsive to this customer request. A well-managed newsletter would provide easy access to reliable information and would

support the FHWA strategic goals and objectives by making use of telecommunications technologies to help facilitate the information exchange and technology delivery process.

Activity: Develop a web-based technical newsletter focusing on technology and research activities within the Midwest Divisions and State DOTs.

Measures: FY00: - develop and establish the newsletter
- develop a network of contributors to provide content
- post-event (6 months) survey of potential users to determine: awareness and use of the newsletter, and applicability of content; assure customer satisfaction
- customers and stakeholders actively contribute content for the newsletter

FY01: - increase in rate of technology deployment in the Midwest (a measure to be developed)

FHWA Performance Goal: Increase percentage of kilometers (miles) on the NHS that meet Owner-Agency managed pavement performance for acceptable ride quality, i.e., International Roughness Index less than or equal to 2.68 m/km (170 in/mi).

Strategies: Public, private, and governmental investments focus on road reconstruction and rehabilitation, and promote advances in road construction, repair, and maintenance technology. FHWA technology deployment initiatives will ensure that advancements in pavement materials and high performance materials are adopted to improve the performance of the NHS.

Activity: Support the successful deployment of new technologies, develop and conduct training to enable the enhancement of SHA performance and their use of improved technologies and processes, and provide expert advice and assistance so that problems are corrected or, ideally, averted.

Measure: FY00/01:- number of training courses and workshops provided
- number of technical assistance requests fulfilled

FHWA Performance Goal: 1) Improve the condition of NHS bridges. 2) Improve the condition of all bridges.

Strategies: Public, private, and governmental investments will help replace or rehabilitate existing bridges. FHWA will focus on research advances in the technology of bridge design, construction, repair, and maintenance. FHWA technology deployment initiatives will ensure that advancements in high performance materials and seismic retrofit techniques are actively promoted to improve the performance of bridges.

Activity: Develop enhanced decision support tool for improving the condition of all bridges and NHS bridges, in particular (Links, p.11, NSP; p.16 NPP)

Measure: FY00: - number of enhanced decision support tools distributed
FY01: - number of bridge investment plans modified as a result of the improved decision support tools
FY02: - bridge condition improvement

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) have become a key strategy for local stakeholders and State DOT's to manage and operate their transportation systems. The Federal-aid program, training, and research activities of FHWA will be promoted by the ITS Team at the Resource Center and will support Division Office, State and local Stakeholder efforts in planning for, procuring, installing and operating ITS.

Activities related to these goals that will be accomplished at the Midwestern Resource Center will include tasks that insure coordination at the State and within major metropolitan areas to afford the most efficient deployment of ITS and the best opportunity for integrated and interoperable technical infrastructure. Specifically these activities are; providing technical assistance for service plans and other deployment initiatives, and to provide technical assistance and training for the National ITS Architecture.

Activity: Provide technical assistance to Division Offices, State and local Stakeholders to develop service plans and deploy ITS systems.

Measures: FY00: - number of service plans developed and implemented by Division Offices
- deployment of ITS Systems as measured by the Deployment Tracking System utilized in the ITS program

Activity: Provide technical assistance and training on the National ITS Architecture.

Measures: FY00: - number of Tier 1 and 2 training sessions provided
- number of Regional Architectures developed

Planning and Environment Team Section

Highways and transportation facilities have major effects on the quality of life in communities and the quality of the natural environment. Through Federal-aid programs, incentives, training research, and new technologies, we will work with our partners to ensure highway facilities enhance the natural environment.

Activities related to these goals that will be accomplished by the Midwestern Resource Center include;

conducting NEPA training, providing technical assistance for streamlining agreements, strengthening the STIP/TIP process, increasing the use of innovative financing, and strengthening the use of environmental justice in the planning process.

Activity: Develop and instruct training modules addressing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (link, p. 38, NPP)

Measures: FY00: - number of people trained
- number of courses instructed
- training course evaluations
- post-event (6 months) survey of supervisors of attendees on how environmental process has improved

FY01: - percentage of environmental documents with EPA's highest rating

FY02: - assessment of environmental documents by a sample of other Federal reviewing agencies (e.g., ACOE or USFWS).

Activity: Instruct the new 3-day "Public Involvement in NEPA and the Transportation Decision Making" NHI course

Measures: FY00: - number of courses conducted
FY00: - post-course (6 month) evaluations
FY01: - States where training has been held providing additional participation in the transportation decision making process

Activity: Provide technical assistance for NEPA streamlining agreements (link, p. 22, NSP; p. 37, NPP)

Measures: FY00: - number of executed project specific MOAs
FY00/01:- number of executed multi-state agreements
FY01: - reduction in time for EIS from NOI to ROD, including time to interim milestones for specifically designated projects in FY 00.

Activity: Enhance relationship between Statewide and urban transportation planning and project development. (link, p. 22, NSP; p. 37-39, NPP)

Measures: FY00: - number of best practices shared
FY01: - examples of State/MPO processes that have changed as a result of best practices shared
FY02: - decreasing numbers of approved modifications in STIP/TIP process

Activity: Partner with HQ in promoting the Highway Economics Requirements System - State

(HERS-ST) economic analytical model for use in decision making (link p. 19, NSP; p. 36/37, NPP).

Measures: FY00: - number of State DOTs participating in pilot program
 FY01: - promotion of the generic HERS-ST to all States in MRC area
 FY02: - number of States using the HERS-ST model

Activity: Hold training and/or briefings in the areas of Historic Regulations, and Native American issues and involvement. (p. 37/38, NPP)

Measures: FY00: - number of courses instructed
 - training course evaluations

 - post-event (6 months) survey of supervisors of attendees on how environmental process has improved

 FY01: - percentage of environmental documents with EPA's highest rating

Activity: Share best practices with HQ, Resource Centers, Divisions, States, MPOs and others. Work with HQ and divisions to implement new planning tools such as STEAM, IDAS, and TRANSIMS.

Measures: FY00: - number of best practices shared
 - incorporation of best practices into transportation planning process

Activity: Work with FTA Regions 5 and 7 to develop an Intermodal Planning Group for the MRC service area which demonstrates the value of an MPO based approach.

Measures: FY00: - agreement with FTA on Scope of IPG
 - satisfaction of MPOs with new IPG process

Activity: Develop, maintain and disseminate information/best practices to educate customers in the innovative financing techniques available to further projects that may otherwise be delayed due to limited resources.

Measures: FY00: - number of technologies transferred
 - use of innovative financing techniques
 - number of projects with an accelerated start date
 - level of increased effectiveness in project funding

Safety Team

More than 40,000 Americans die and 3 million are injured in motor vehicle crashes on our highways

each year. Safety is therefore a high priority for FHWA. By providing technical advice and training, addressing specific concerns of the Divisions and State DOTs, supporting national high priority safety programs, and marketing technology and solutions that will help to resolve safety challenges, the MRC will help to continually improve highway safety in the Midwestern States. Ultimately, the safety-related activities supported or undertaken by the MRC are fashioned to contribute to a 20 percent national reduction in the number of highway-related fatalities and injuries over a 10-year period.

Activity: Provide technical advice and training in areas that meet the needs of individual States, addressing a number of the aspects of safety technology and design. Emphasis areas include roadside design, older driver design, and pedestrian/bike issues.

Measures: FY00: - number of courses taught
- number of people trained
- number of newly developed or modified training courses taught
- number of presentations made at State-level conferences and meetings
- number of articles and papers published
- rating/evaluation of instruction or presentation quality

FY00/01:- where applicable, follow-up survey (3 - 6 months) to determine impact of training or other assistance on job impacts and value of RC contributions

FY02: - continuing reduction in fatality and injury numbers in the ten States.

Activity: **Focusing on Human Behavior** - The Stop Red Light Running (SRLR) Campaign and NHTSA Safe Communities Activities.

Measures: FY00: - number of requests for SRLR information
- number of "hits" on the SRLR homepage
- number of referrals from SRLR homepage
- number of informational mailings
- number of SRLR outreach events supported
- number of Safe Community training sessions held
- number of participants in SC training sessions

FY00/01:- media exposure during National Stop Red Light Running Week
- media exposure for individual events in which we play a part or support
- number of local Safe Communities training sessions held

FY01/02:- reduction in RLR fatality and injury numbers
- number of new safe communities.

Activity: **Promoting Safety Management Processes** - MW Safety Data Conference, MW Safety Management Workshop and Road Safety Audit Initiatives.

- Measures: FY00: - conference and Workshop held (y/n)
- number of attendees
 - participant rating of conference/workshop
 - contributing to development of Road Safety Audit (RSA) training course (y/n)
 - number of RSA's participated in
 - participant rating of pilot RSA course
 - number of RSA presentations
 - follow-up survey of conference/workshop speakers and participants reveals meaningful contribution to activities in, contacts among and products of State programs.
 - number of requests to support RSA development activities.
 - continuing reduction in fatality and injury numbers in the ten States.

Management and Information Services Team

The Midwestern Resource Center will utilize a web-based customer feedback system to measure the quality of our customers services, determine the effectiveness of our key business areas of training, expert and program assistance, and technology delivery. This system will also be used to identify new opportunities for improving the types and levels of service to our clients, customers and partners.

Activity: Create and maintain a web-based customer survey which addresses the measurement of our services and the satisfaction of our customers (p. 53, NPP).

- Measures: FY00: - establish the system
- assist other Resource Centers in the creation of their surveys
- FY01: - obtain a minimum of 10 customer responses for each specialist
- establish a 60% response rate
 - develop new customer contacts
 - identify new opportunities for technical and program assistance

Quality Journey

Activity: Assist Divisions in using and understanding Customer Feedback. (*Link to NPP pg. 53, Customer Focus*)

- Measures: FY00: - number of Divisions gathering customer feedback
- FY01: - number of Divisions using customer feedback information to drive their annual plans. (goal: 10)

Activity: Self assessments (*Link to NPP pg. 52, Leadership*)

- Measures: FY00: - number of self assessments completed (goal: 11)

- number of Divisions and the Midwestern Resource Center with assessment activities incorporated into plans or equivalent system (goal: 11)

FY01: - completion of the planned activities (goal: yes or no)

FY02: - improvement in results measures (goal: 11)

Activity: Share “best” practices among Divisions and other units. Report on Midwest State of Quality and work with CMS & RC coordinators to prepare an FHWA State of Quality. (*Link to NPP pg. 52, Leadership and pg. 53, Information and Analysis*)

Measures: FY00: - report prepared (goal: yes or no)

FY01: - number of improvements due to sharing practices (goal: 15 nationally)

Activity: Assist Division’s identification of product and service, support and supplier processes and teach CPI course (*Link to NPP pg. 54, Process Management*)

Measures: FY00: - number of Divisions that have preliminary identification of product and service processes, support processes, and supplier processes (goal: 10)

- teach CPI course (goal: 4)

- number of Divisions and Resource Center that have taken CPI course

- number of Divisions that have an individual that can facilitate CPI

FY01: - number of Divisions have processes in place to design and manage key processes (goal: 10)

Activity: Deliver training on Performance Measurement and participate on the Partners Task Force (*Link to NPP pg. 52, Strategic Planning*)

Measures: FY00: - number of Divisions that have someone who has been trained (goal: 10)

- percentage of measures that are target or improvement measures rather than project measures (goal: 50%)

FY01: - number of MRC Divisions which use partner measures (goal: 4)

FY02: - number of MRC Divisions that use partner measures (goal: 10)

Civil Rights

Activity: Promote and provide training on the American’s With Disabilities Act to the disabled community, upon request, to acquaint them with FHWA’s responsibilities.

Measures: - number of training sessions/number of people trained

National Security

Activity: Support of the Department of Transportation's Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator (RETCO) Program (link p. 47-48, NPP)

Measures:

FY00:	-	number of Division Emergency Preparedness (EP) Coordinators provided with advanced training
	-	number of Divisions with employee orientation training
	-	number of Emergency Support Function #1 team members trained
	-	number of Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans current to within 3 years
	-	number of Emergency Highway Traffic Regulation (EHTR) Plans current to within 3 years
	-	process in place for proper audit trail and reimbursement by FEMA for expenditures incurred during disasters
FY01:	-	conduct self-assessment of readiness based on feedback from FEMA, OET, DOD, and States.
	-	number of ESF #1 Team members with advanced training and disaster deployment experience
FY02:	-	amend and deliver training based on self-assessment